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academies and specialists like every other great idea that ever originated in the brain of man. Eventually it will not be Academies nor specialists who will carry this idea through, but men of affairs and action.

The statement that "languages are living organisms as much as animals, and it is not more or less possible to create spiritual than it is to create physical organisms," is certainly open to grave objections. There is no analogy whatever between a language and an animal, except in a very symbolical sense; languages have been created by men, though up to the present they have not been created perfect, but nobody has so far succeeded or is likely ever to succeed in creating an animal, no matter of how inferior a kind.

That it is easy to construct such a language, grammar as well as vocabulary, is by no means asserted; that there are many difficulties to be overcome, not the least of which is the apathy of the majority of mankind, is freely conceded; but that this should deter us from at least trying to solve the task, or that it is *eo ipso* impossible, not only to invent a language fit for the purpose but also to have it universally adopted, is strongly denied.

C. T. STRAUSS.

COLOMBO, CEYLON.

#### EDITORIAL COMMENT.

While I do not believe that the adoption of an artificial language which should serve as a universal means of communication among people of different nationalities is feasible, I propose to have the problem discussed, and will not hinder the good work if such it be. I am not an enemy to the propaganda, but on the contrary believe that the discussion of the problem and attempts at constructing a universal language will prove beneficial. I have criticized the views of the advocates of Esperanto, but from my own standpoint I wish to give my critics also an ample opportunity to express their opinions and to censure my own propositions. I will say, however, that though I have given a careful perusal to Mr. Strauss's letter, I have not been convinced by his arguments.

I will dismiss at once a consideration of Esperanto because Mr. Strauss seems to agree with me that it does not fulfil the requirements, but I will repeat here that in my opinion the use of English would serve the purpose of an International language better than any artificial language heretofore proposed, first because it is the

easiest language to learn, and in this general statement I include all artificial languages as yet invented. It is further spoken by the greatest number of people on earth, and is likely to become in the natural process of competition the world language so much desired by Esperantists.

I grant that for the purpose of expressing one's thought with nicety and in an elegant form English is as difficult as any other language, but for the purpose of communicating in a rough way our urgent needs English is quite recommendable, and how well it adapts itself to circumstances can be seen by the formation of pigeon English, which is a kind of literal translation of Chinese into English. It is by no means elegant English speech but it fulfils the needs of communication between the English and the Chinese.

It seems strange that Mr. Strauss calls upon the authority of Max Müller although he bears in mind my references to him on the subject which suggest that Max Müller's support of any artificial language must not be taken seriously. There are men, and sometimes very prominent men, who can easily be induced to lend their name for any purpose that is not obviously objectionable, and Max Müller appears to have belonged to this class. The same Max Müller who endorses several artificial languages as the very best, claimed that languages could not be made but originated through natural growth.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Strauss says that to consider languages as living organisms is "certainly open to grave objections," and I will say in reply that this expression is more than a mere figure of speech. Languages have become such by being used, by being spoken and understood, and their vital physiological growth lies in the brains of men. A language that lives in books only, a language which has never been in practical use, is not a language but is an artificial design for a language. I claim that it is as easy to produce as many artificial designs for languages as it is difficult to create a real language that would be actually spoken and serve as a means of communication. Our speech is a living language only because there are living structures in the brains of people into which it has been impressed, and the difficulty consists in making the meaning of words agree to such an extent that a sound uttered by one is understood by others in the sense, or approximately in the sense, in which it was pronounced. Languages themselves are mere vibrations of air, but a living speech

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller used the Greek term *θέσει*, not *φύσει*.

is a complicated organism the vitality of which lies in the cerebral structures of living and thinking beings.

I do not deny the theoretical possibility of constructing a living organism, but I deny its feasibility and also its usefulness. In the same sense I do not deny the possibility of constructing an artificial language, but for all that I deny both the feasibility of it and its usefulness. I believe that the international language which will be spoken by all mankind on earth will come. I have the firm conviction that it is bound to come. I also believe that those idealists who try to create an artificial language for this purpose will act as pioneers in the line of these aspirations, but I do not believe that they are called upon to complete the work or that they will be successful in their endeavor. They are and will remain voices crying in the wilderness, and the fulfilment of their hopes will be as different as the Christ that was finally accepted by mankind was different from the Messiah ideal of the disciples of St. John.

While I do not believe that we can make plants or even living organisms by artificial means, I do not deny that we can improve the existing species. Mr. Strauss misinterprets my propositions when he thinks that I would oppose progress or ridicule the attempts at improving existing conditions, be it in spelling or pronunciation or grammar, but the successful reformer in all lines will be he who follows nature and builds upon those products which nature has given us. Burbank and Nilsson do not try to create new plants out of inorganic matter but they take the plants which nature furnishes us and improve them in such a way as to be more suitable for our needs and purposes. Accordingly I suggest that the method of reformers in the line of language should employ the same methods. Let them take the languages that exist and improve them.

English has, at least in my opinion, the best chance of becoming the world language, but it is by no means the only language that competes for this place of honor. I believe that to some extent Spanish has also been extremely successful. It has conquered the entire America south of the Rio Grande, and I would point out that it also possesses qualities which would enable it to become acceptable as a universal language.

Spanish has two great preferences over the English. One is its sonorous sound, the other its spelling, but I can not help thinking that the spelling problem is not quite so serious as Mr. Strauss makes it. It will be settled one way or another within reasonable time, and while I propose to move slowly in the line of spelling

reform, because the present method does not appeal to me, I am in sympathy with the aspiration for reformed spelling, and perhaps also for a reformed pronunciation.<sup>2</sup>

In theory it is quite possible to construct a living animal. I learn that in one of the laboratories of Johns Hopkins University, organs of frogs have been so transferred that practically new animals are composed. The heart of one frog is inserted into another, and if I can trust my informer (Professor Mall) kidneys have been inserted in cats and rabbits in out-of-the-way places where these kidneys continued their original function of filtering blood and producing urea. The possibilities of artificial combinations of this kind are unlimited, but in my opinion the experiments prove as little the feasibility of constructing an organism out of inorganic elements, as reformations of speech, grammar, spelling, etc., justify a belief in the creation of an artificial language.

Mr. Strauss will say that this is a dogmatic assertion and I grant that it is. I can only say that those who believe in the construction of artificial languages are welcome to try, and if they fail to try again. I am willing to watch the several trials, though the lifetime of one generation will not be sufficient to see all the failures resulting therefrom. Mr. Strauss misinterprets my position in several ways, and I will incidentally collect a few of his comments. He thinks that I would imply that the most irregular language ought to be the best because I say that irregularities of grammar are useful contrivances of nature, occurring in the most used words such as auxiliary verbs and other terms of common use. But I deny that my view of the origin of irregular forms leads to the inference which he draws therefrom. Irregularities originate according to our needs, and to increase them beyond their needs would certainly not be desirable. In the same way in rapid writing, such as shorthand, we use certain abbreviations. They are useful and serve their purpose, but if we would abbreviate every word we would soon find out that they would no longer be serviceable.

I believe that if an artificial language would really be accepted it would very soon introduce certain irregularities, abbreviations, typical phrases, etc., all of which would form exceptions or special applications or peculiar modes of expression analogous to the ir-

<sup>2</sup>The English speaking people might meet other nationalities half way by dropping some of their peculiarities of pronunciation. In my opinion there is no reason to drop the *g*, *k*, and *p*, and other consonants before liquids. At any rate English speaking people can pronounce these letters as well as foreigners in such terms as psychic, gnostic, gnome, knight, knife, etc.

regularities of the natural languages. They all would have to be learned in the same way as the grammar and irregular forms of natural languages, and an artificial language would therefore have not the slightest preference in this respect over a natural language.

The choice of terms must be decided by usage. When I referred to the difference of meaning in "you gain" and "you win," and how these two words which originally meant the same had been differentiated in English, I meant to call attention to the fact that such differentiation of meaning and an establishment of one definite meaning must precede that state of a language in which it becomes definite and intelligible. So long as words may mean whatever they imply by etymology the language is still like a charade. Its meaning must be guessed.

I expect to see the dethronement of Esperanto from its present place of prominence, nor do I doubt that other attempts will be made; —or rather I am cognizant of the fact that they are being made now.

Mr. Strauss seems to think that the construction of such a language would not be easy while I take the opposite view. It seems to me that such languages can be constructed with great facility upon very different foundations, either upon the Teutonic elements of a pan-German, or upon the several idioms of Romance speech. In either case it would be easy enough to supply a grammar or a vocabulary analogous to those in existence, but to make such a language acceptable to the people, to introduce it, to impress it into the living structures of human brains will prove to be a task beyond the power of mortal man.

At any rate I feel sure that it could not be introduced by either a majority vote, or by force or through the instrumentality of governments, and if it existed, if it were really accepted, it would still be doubtful whether it would be a fit vessel to receive the thought of scientific work as well as the poetry of the different nations. If it would serve as a medium for commercial purposes it might not be fit for any other use.

The main objection to the English which finds the readiest echo is the argument voiced by Mr. Strauss in these words: "The other nations would very surely object to the great advantage English speaking nations would thereby enjoy." However, it seems to me that if English becomes the world language it will not be through the consent of other nations but by sheer power of circumstances. People of different nationalities must make themselves understood,

and I believe that the English language has so far best fulfilled all the requirements.

One reason why, according to Mr. Strauss, neither English nor any other living language ought to be selected for international use is the fact that "they are continually changing and coining new words, strange phrases, etc., which every foreigner would have to be continually learning." I reply that if Esperanto or any artificial language would become a real true international language it would just as much continually change and add new words. If it did not it would not serve its purpose. The introduction of new ideas, new views, new aspirations, etc., require new terms, and if such modifications were excluded from an artificial language it would never hold its own against a truly living speech.

#### AUTHOR'S REJOINER.

With regard to your reply I take exception only to the last paragraph, wherein you imply that I made the statement that an artificial language would not need new words from time to time. I certainly think that it does need additions to keep up with the progress of the world. But while in natural languages these new words are coined either by the inventors of new "things," or by popular usage, in an artificial language it would be done scientifically to fit into the structure of that language. And I expressly stated in my article not that in an artificial language the introduction of new words and other modifications would be excluded, but that it "would adopt only such new words as would from time to time be officially promulgated by whatever central authority would exist for this purpose."

#### AN EXPLANATION.\*

*To the Editor of The Monist:*

Permit me to rectify an error, or rather give an explanation, with reference to my articles on "The Third Movement of the Earth" which appeared together in the July *Monist*.

On page 401, lines 4 and 5, it is said that observations have assigned to the movement of the third rotation a velocity of 48" a century, which causes the rotation to be accomplished in 2,700,000 years.

\* Translated from a personal letter of M. Beziau.